

"Supporting Parents' Involvement  
in the Development and  
Education of Their Children"



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### Standardized Testing in South Dakota

During the 2001 legislative session Senate Bill 234 was signed into law which mandates that every South Dakota school district administer the same academic achievement test. This test is to be administered twice a year, once in the fall semester and once again in the spring semester, to all students in grades three, six, and ten. The law further mandates that this test shall be matched with what children are expected to learn in school.

The DACS (Dakota Assessment of Content Standards) has been identified by the South Dakota Department of Education to meet the mandates of the new law. The DACS is test which students take over the Internet. Students are brought to labs or other computer areas during the school day to log onto the system and begin taking the tests. The test tracks the highest and lowest points in a student's ability in the subject being assessed. The system then adjusts the test items based on this information. This means that each student receives a unique test based on his or her level of performance. The results of these tests serve several purposes. They help teachers, principals, and superintendents...



- ✘ Evaluate and improve the school district
- ✘ Evaluate and improve the individual school
- ✘ Identify a child's academic strengths
- ✘ Identify areas where a child may need to improve

During the Fall of 2001, South Dakota school districts were able to try out the new system in Reading and Math. Eventually, students will also tested in science, language arts, and social studies. According to the new law, the DACS will be mandated in the spring of the 2001-2002 school year.

Remember that teachers learn about students using a variety of methods. Tests give only part of the picture of a child's strengths and needs. Children are never measured on the basis of one test alone. Teachers combine the results of many methods to gain well-rounded insights into the skills, abilities, and knowledge of a child. By understanding the role of testing, you can help your child succeed in school and can develop a better relationship among you, your child, and your child's school.

*Testing is only one of several tools used to evaluate a child's performance. Children should never measured on the basis of one test alone.*